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BRITISH MUSEUM

To the PUBLIC.

IN the political conteſts which now agitate the metropolis, the activity and views of a great officer of the crown are ſufficiently underſtood. To augment his power, and to extend his conſequence, are the objects at which he aims; and, from his paſt tranſactions, it is not unfair to prognoſticate his future conduct. I mean not to go over his parliamentary career. It was more noiſy than inſtructive, and more ſucceſsful than meritorious. There is a part, however, of his behaviour, which, in the preſent ſtate of the borough, deſerves to attract obſervation. It has a reference to a ſubject of the higheſt importance, and cannot be attended to with too much care.

The zeal with which he ventured to ſupport the Popiſh Bill is recent, and in every man's memory; and the conſequences of that project will not ſoon be forgotten. An alarm equal to the danger ſpread itſelf over Scotland; and, if the obſtinacy of the Miniſter had not ſubſided, the fires of civil diſcord would have burſt forth with the moſt deſtructive rage. The terrors excited by this Bill are not yet at an end; apprehenſions of Popery ſtill prevail, and the ſcheme of repealing the ſtatutes againſt it is rather ſuſpended than relinquiſhed. The contempt with which the fears of the Proteſtants were treated, was exceſſive and deceitful; and the friends to religious and civil liberty are yet diſpoſed to imagine, that a moment of ſupineneſs and ſecurity is waited for, when a deep wound may be given to laws which were intended as a perpetual bulwark againſt

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the idolatry of the Church of Rome, and the inſolence of arbitrary power.

In this ſtate of apprehenſion, the diſſolution of the parliament has called the attention of the metropolis to the election of a repreſentative. Stimulated by inordinate ambition, the Champion of the Popiſh Bill is diſturbing it anew with his cabals, and is ſtraining every nerve, and moving every engine to diſcomfit the pretenſions of the late member. If he ſhall finally prevail in this ſtruggle, and his conſequence receive ſo powerful an advantage as the effectual confirmation of the candidate for whom he has canvaſſed, it is no idle ſpeculation to conſider the danger to which the Proteſtant Intereſt may be expoſed. With new conſideration he will acquire new courage. The favourite idea of deſtroying all the reſtraints upon Popery will be revived. The office he exerciſes, his natural proneneſs to violence and indiſcretion, his want of information and knowledge, his private intereſt, the favours he has already obtained, and thoſe with which he flatters himſelf in expectation, will all concur to impel him to act with little delicacy, and with infinite precipitation. The partizans of the Romiſh Religion are ſtill looking to the advantages which appeared to be once within their reach. The genius of their faith ſeduces them to operate to its extenſion with unremitting obſtinacy. They are inceſſantly upon the watch; and, while they ſeem to be loſt in obſcurity, are proſecuting their purpoſes, and alluring proſelytes. In the boſom of the Church itſelf, there is alſo a ſpring of corruption and jealouſy. A combination of its members have expreſſed their deſire for the moſt unlimited indulgence of the Roman Catholic Religion; and they are the avowed adherents of the Popiſh Champion.

But, while it cannot be denied that a prejudice may ariſe to the Proteſtant Cauſe, by foſtering the conſequence and the faction of a great

great officer of the crown, it is a matter of equal ſurpriſe and regret that the firſt borough of Scotland ſhould have been allured into the hazard of adding its ſtrength to his power. By arts of management, the deacons, or the repreſentation of the trades, inſtead of giving a check to the encroaching domination of the promoter of the Popiſh Bill, have diſcovered a ſolicitude to arm him with greater authority. Without attending to the conſequences which they ought to have apprehended, without foreſeeing the injury that might accrue to the Proteſtant Intereſt, and without recollecting the abſolute thraldom into which the city might be brought, they engaged in a confederacy againſt their antient repreſentative, and againſt the merchant council. And, while they were blind and inattentive to the great and general principles of utility, which ſhould have directed their conduct, all the ſmaller ſteps of their defection and behaviour have been marked with infatuation and diſgrace.

Till the parliament was diſſolved, it was the general belief that the trades were the friends of Sir Laurence Dundas; and his liberal and ſpirited conduct in parliament, which is affectedly made a topic of cenſure, had a claim to their warmeſt gratitude, and ought to have been a tie of their firmeſt attachment. The Convener had been laviſh of his expreſſions of zeal. But he was above the obligation of promiſes, and the ſolemnity of profeſſions. He revolted from Sir Laurence Dundas, and did not ſcruple to offer himſelf as a candidate in his room. The deacons were obſequious and obedient. A meaſure more humiliating ſoon followed. The deacons, as diveſted of all power of underſtanding and judgment, were transferred to a new candidate for the repreſentation; and the Convener and his aſſociates became the ſubſervient vaſſals of a Junto, who, for ſome years paſt, have contended for the ſuperiority of the borough. By the direction of this Junto, who were afraid that the deacons might yet recover a juſt ſenſe of their duty and importance, they

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were watched with the moſt ſuſpicious anxiety; they were even taken into cuſtody, excluded from ſociety and intercourſe, and reſtrained from the exerciſe of their uſual occupations. Theſe inſults to decency, and order, and law, were ſucceeded by a ſolemn mockery of the moſt ſacred rights of election. The Convener and his deacons actually proceeded to make a choice of a repreſentative for the borough, in a meeting which had no ſanction from the chief magiſtrate; in which no precept was produced; and from which a majority of the merchant council, who are the real and proper repreſentation of the community, were abſent.

It is perhaps impoſſible to form a conception of proceedings more informal, more outrageous, and which may produce effects more deſtructive and ruinous. But, though the deacons are more immediately to bear all the ſcorn which they ſo ſtrongly excite, a high degree of diſgrace is yet reflected by them upon the fourteen Incorporations of the city.

Theſe Incorporations, inſtead of beſtowing encomium and panegyrick, ought, of conſequence, to have conſidered whether, in juſtice to themſelves, they ſhould not have given authority to delegates to advertiſe the public, that they were far from approving of the ſtrain of conduct, and of the abuſes into which their repreſentatives have been driven or ſeduced. It is certain, at leaſt, that a meaſure of this ſort would have inſtructed the deacons in the future to pay more reſpect to the importance of the trades; and be a preſervative againſt their interrupting the unanimity and concord which ought to prevail between them and the merchant council. All the odium of the exceptionable tranſactions would then have reſted excluſively upon the actors in them, the real and undiſguiſed ſenſe of the Incorporations would have been fully underſtood, and the public would have looked with confidence to a riſing union of the merchant

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council and the trades. It cannot poſſibly be the wiſh of the Incorporations that the intereſt of the city ſhould be ſacrificed to a family who have been long its determined enemies; who may convert its own weight and influence to its ruin; and who have an acknowledged and preferable attachment to the county. In a word, they cannot deſire to add to the greatneſs of an officer of the crown, whoſe zeal for the Romiſh Religion threatened ſo lately to deluge Scotland with blood. It ought to be their motto, *No ſubordination to the Houſe of Arniſton; no Popery.*

From the reunion of the merchant council and the trades, laſting advantages may be expected. The approaching elections of the Magiſtracy, it is probable, will put a period to all diſputes, and to the intrigues of the enemies of the borough. A real and formal election of a repreſentative will take place. The town-council, united and firm, ſuperior to influence, and diſdaining bribes, will conſult the true line of their intereſt. The ſervices of the late member, and thoſe of his ſon, in the Popiſh Bill, will be remembered with gratitude. His liberalities to the city, his extenſive power in parliament, his wealth, his ſtrong attachment to his country, as well from his habitudes as his property, and his forcible claims to the attention of government, are recommendations which cannot be forgotten nor miſrepreſented. It is by attending to his conſequence that the magiſtracy can promote their own. It is by defeating the proud pretenſions of the Houſe of Arniſton, that the borough can ſecure moſt deciſively its proſperity and independence; and its protectors and guardians will not forſake it in the hour of danger, and give it up to tyranny, oppreſſion, and bondage.

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